

Keeping U.S. Waters Safe and Secure

Industry leadership in port security.

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The maritime industry has always played an integral part in the development and implementation of regulations. Without this support and leadership, the regulatory process would be contentious and potentially damage the staunch relationship that the U.S. Coast Guard has developed with maritime industry partners. Their assistance in developing the provisions of the Maritime Transportation Security Act (MTSA) of 2002 was invaluable. During this process, the alternative security program (ASP) was developed to provide industry partners greater flexibility in meeting MTSA requirements.

The Coast Guard was commended by the maritime industry for establishing the ASP provisions that prompted security programs compatible with a large segment of the regulated U.S. merchant maritime fleet. Several organizations, including the American Waterways Operators, Passenger Vessel Association, Lake Carriers Association, and the Offshore Marine Service Association, rose to the challenge and developed ASPs for their specific industry segments. To date, there are nine approved alternative security programs, which include thousands of vessels and facilities throughout the nation.

American Waterways Operators

The American Waterways Operators (AWO) is a national association representing the owners and operators of towing vessels and barges serving inland and coastal waters of the United States. The towing industry accounts for 79 percent of all domestic waterborne freight (Figure 1). Of the 31,449 towing vessels and barges in the towing industry, AWO



Figure 1: A crane barge maneuvers near other barges on the Houston ship channel. PA2 James Dillard, USCG.

member companies account for 80 percent of them. Since September 11, 2001, AWO took a very proactive approach toward development of an ASP for the towing industry.

According to Ms. Amy K. Hewett, AWO's manager, government affairs, "AWO brought together a diverse cross section of members to develop their alternative security program." Their efforts resulted in a practical alternative security program that significantly enhanced the security of the towboat industry.

"The AWO ASP has enabled AWO members to focus on implementing security measures to reduce the vulnerability of their vessels and operations, rather than spending time developing individual vessel plans and obtaining Coast Guard approval," Hewett said.

When asked about changes the AWO would like to see in the ASP portion of the rule, Hewett commended the Coast Guard for allowing trade associations and other industry groups to develop ASPs that address the particular needs of specific segments of the maritime industry. However, she recommended the use of the same compliance checklist by member companies when verifying a vessel's implementation of the AWO ASP.

The Lake Carriers Association

The Lake Carriers Association (LCA) represents U.S.-flagged vessel operators on the Great Lakes. The association has 12 member companies, which operate 55 vessels, including self-propelled vessels and integrated tug/barge units that range in length from 383 to 1,013.5 feet. In fact, 13 of LCA's vessels are more than 1,000 feet long. Cargo carried by these vessels includes coal, iron ore, stone, cement, salt, grain, and liquid bulk products (Figure 2).

An LCA-developed alternative security program for Great Lakes carriers was approved by the Coast Guard in December 2004. For its efforts, the LCA was commended by RADM Ron Silva, Commander of the 9th Coast Guard District: "Your foresight will not only assist the Great Lakes community in complying with MTSA requirements but, more importantly, will greatly enhance the security of your vessels and the people of the Great Lakes."

According to Mr. Glen Nekvasil, LCA's vice president, corporate communications, "the primary success of the ASP is that it is tailored to the Great Lakes environment. Also, everyone has a clear understanding of what is required and how best to achieve its goals. What will be most important in the future will be to ensure that any changes in the security regime are based on risk and recognize the difference in operating conditions throughout the U.S. Merchant Marine."

The Offshore Marine Service Association

The Offshore Marine Service Association (OMSA) is a national trade organization of offshore marine operators that addresses and pursues issues relevant to vessels engaged in various offshore activities, including crew boats for oil rigs, offshore supply and utility service vessels, lift boats, cargo and derrick barges, offshore construction and other specialized offshore support vessels. After 9/11, OMSA provided the leadership needed to prevent exploitation of offshore marine industry assets by terrorists.

"OMSA immediately recognized that one of the cornerstones of security for America's vital offshore oil and gas infrastructure was the people and vessels that support that infrastructure," commented Mr.

Ken Parris, OMSA vice president. "With offshore sources of oil and gas supplying more than 25 percent of America's energy needs, it was vital to prepare a unified program that would quickly ramp up the offshore industry's security posture."

OMSA took responsibility to develop a unified security plan that could be used across the entire industry and formed a working group of company security officers to develop responses to security scenarios for various threat levels. These recommendations were developed into an industry-relevant ASP and submitted to Coast Guard for approval.



Figure 2: The Columbia Star navigates a lock.

When asked about OMSA's experience in developing and implementing its ASP, Parris said, "Our experience was one of consultation and cooperation. By involving the Coast Guard staff early, and through regular contact, we were able to produce a product that required minimal editing prior to final approval. Deployment and implementation of the plan was facilitated by the use of an industry-wide ASP."

The Passenger Vessel Association

The Passenger Vessel Association (PVA) is a trade organization that focuses on the issues and concerns relevant to owners and operators of small passenger vessels. PVA members own or operate passenger ferries, small dinner cruise ships, charter vessels, gaming vessels, excursion vessels, and other small passenger vessels that carry an estimated 200 million passengers each year. The limited resources available and competitiveness of the small passenger vessel industry has made compliance with the MTSA security regulations more challenging. To ensure the security of the passengers, crews, and cargo, it was imperative that this challenge be met and overcome. By partnering with the Coast Guard, PVA was able to develop industry standards for security of passenger vessels that led to the development of an approved PVA alternative security program (Figure 3).

Ms. Beth Gedney, director of safety, security, and risk management for PVA, said, "Developing the ASP was a very positive experience. We believe that the end result is always much better when Coast Guard and PVA develop the document together, to address concerns on both sides; the result is a better product that requires less adjusting afterwards."

PVA president Mr. Gary Frommelt commented, "This is a significant achievement for the passenger vessel industry and a major benefit for PVA members. It means that PVA members will have direct access to a security program that has already been thought through for them. They will have a viable and effective tool that will allow them to efficiently enhance their organization's security, while helping to meet the security needs of our nation."



Figure 3: Passengers are screened prior to ferry launch.

The Maritime Transportation Security Act has been very successful in enhancing the security posture of the maritime industry and community. A key element of this success has been the leadership provided by the maritime industry's professional organizations. The strong partnership, leadership, and collective professional experience of the marine industry ensured the development of new countermeasures to traditional areas of vulnerability along the waterfront and in the coastal domain. This permitted the Maritime Transportation Security Act to be developed and implemented rapidly following the tragic events of 9/11. Programs such as the ASP continue to ensure that security requirements are catered to the customer, thereby providing the flexibility needed to maintain effective security systems.

About the authors:

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